

Church Control of Education in Clackmannanshire, 1560-1700

HENRY HUTCHISON, M.A., B.D., B.Ed., Ph.D.

PART I

PROBLEMS OF SUPERVISION AND CONTROL

(a) *Introduction*

As far as the county of Clackmannan was concerned, the upheavals associated with the Reformation were neither so violent nor so prolonged as in some other parts of the country. Nevertheless little information is available regarding educational development in Clackmannanshire during the next few decades. Though references to schools before the end of the sixteenth century are extremely meagre — partly because Church records were either poorly kept or have been destroyed, it is known that at least one or two schools were in existence then, even though details of their operation are unavailable. In 1590, for example, an entry in the records of Stirling Presbytery (which had oversight of the major part of Clackmannanshire) mentions the schoolmaster in Menstrie as desiring to enter the ministry.¹ This desire was generally expressed in the years following the Reformation, and many references to the practice whereby teachers proceeded to the ministry are found in church records relating to Clackmannan and adjacent counties.²

The school at Tullibody finds relatively frequent mention in sixteenth-century records. The names of three "Readers" appointed in post-Reformation years to conduct services and who may have taught in the village school were: Andrew Drysdail, 1567; John Kempt, 1574; Thomas Makbreck, 1576.³ But before considering in detail the different patterns of parish education which were supported and fostered by the Church in the county from the late sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth, it is necessary to consider more generally the Church's part in promoting education in the area.

(b) *Presbyterial Authority*

The first explicit reference in the records of Stirling Presbytery to presbyterial supervision and control of education relates to a school just outside Clackmannanshire, but which was under the

¹ MSS. Stirling Presbytery Records, July 1590.

² For example, in the Perthshire village of Dunblane 'Mr Wm. Buchanan was found aspiring to the Ministrie'. (MSS. Stirling Presbytery Records, June 1594.)

³ Watt, L. M., *Alloa and Tullibody* (Alloa 1902), p. 24.

jurisdiction of the Presbytery. This was the Grammar School of Stirling which was to be visited by Presbytery according to the Act of the Synod.⁴ The jurisdiction of this Presbytery extended over a much larger area than that of Clackmannanshire, and it is perhaps important that several illustrations of presbyterial superintendence be taken from towns and villages just outside the boundaries of Clackmannanshire, since they equally show the uniform policy of that Church court towards education.

However, there is little extant documentation of schools and the supervision thereof in the first half of the seventeenth century. Not only are records missing completely (e.g. 1616-1627, 1640-1654), but those covering the earliest years of the century (e.g. 1604-1616) show little indication of presbyterial supervision of schools, and the volume covering the years 1627-40 is only marginally better. However, some references during the early period do confirm that effective ecclesiastical, if not educational, superintendence was being exercised. In 1599, for example, the presbytery decided that Tullibody was no longer to be regarded as the ecclesiastical centre of the parish and they made the formal declaration that Alloa's chapel would be the parish church — to which all the endowments were transferred. The protests of Tullibody were of no avail, and the authority of the presbytery prevailed — perhaps justly, as the centre of population had moved strikingly in Alloa's favour.

(c) *The Presbytery and the Law in the Seventeenth Century*

Despite the limited control exercised by Stirling Presbytery in the early years of the seventeenth century, it is clear that their known efforts to promote additional educational provision met with little success, if for no other reason than that the parochial duty to support a school and master was not legally binding on any would-be provider. This was one of the facts which prompted the formulation of the 1616 Act.⁵ For as much as the King's Majesty having a special care and regard that the true religion be advanced and established in all parts of this kingdom, and that all His Majesty's subjects, especially the youth, be exercised . . . in civilitie, godliness, knowledge and learning . . . and whereas there is no means more powerful to further this his Majesty's princely regard and purpose than the establishing of schools in the particular parishes of this kingdom where the youth may be taught at the least to write and read and be catechised and instructed in the grounds of religion; therefore the King's Majesty has thought it necessary and expedient that in every parish a school shall be established and a fit person appointed to teach the same upon the expense of the parishioners."⁵

The immediate effect of this act in Clackmannanshire is not known — particularly since one of the missing volumes of

⁴ MSS. Stirling Presbytery Records, February 1593.

⁵ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Vol. X, p. 671.

presbytery records covers the years 1616-27. In some counties, however, a marked improvement did follow the act of 1616 and further advance may have resulted from the 1633 act, which was essentially a ratification of the act of 1616, with the additional proviso that "the Bischops in thair severall visitatiounes sall have power with consent of the heritors and most part of the parischioners" to implement the act. Further progress followed the act of 1646 which provided for the founding of a school and the appointing of a schoolmaster in every parish not already provided. This was true, for example, in Lanarkshire.⁶ Some improvement did take place in Clackmannanshire, but it was decidedly less marked. The meagre references in presbytery records to presbyterial superintendence of schools in the county may, indeed, be partly due to the fact that other matters were of more concern to the clerks who recorded the items of business.

References to presbyterial superintendence in Clackmannanshire become much more frequent after mid-century. An important method of keeping in touch with the state of education in individual parishes was the presbytery's provision for hearing regular reports by the ministers of the different parishes in the county and in the other parishes situated within the bounds of the presbytery. One entry of 1655 reads: "Cair of scooles. The said day all the brethern . . . were appointed to give in a particular account of the scooles at the next meeting".⁷ The individual parish minister thus played a central role in overseeing the educational provision of the parish.

Nor did the presbytery hesitate to exercise its judicial function. In cases of disagreement among the heritors of the parish, the presbytery's decision would often settle the matter at issue. In the case of a fierce debate among the heritors of Leckie as to the best location for a new school, the presbytery favoured a site in the western section of the parish, "the maist pairt of the heritors being in the west end of the parish."⁸ But heritors could obstruct the provision of suitable facilities for parochial education, and in the matter of their refusal to provide a legal salary for the schoolmaster, it became necessary for the presbytery to resort to legal action. During a presbytery visitation to Alloa in 1657, it was found that the heritors who in 1637 had agreed to provide £100 Scots for school accommodation and schoolmaster's salary, had failed to provide it — despite the ratifying of the arrangement at another presbytery visitation in 1642. Clearly, legal sanctions were one possible solution. As has been noted, "the visitation of 1657 having seriously considered the former acts of the visitations, therefore not only ratified these acts, but ordained the Session to

⁶ Mackintosh, M., *Education in Lanarkshire* (Ph.D. Thesis, Glasgow, 1969), p. 25.

⁷ MSS. Stirling and Dunblane Presbytery Records, January 1655.

⁸ *Ibid.*, July 1656.

prosecute the deficients in a legal way 'for what is resting thereof for bygone and also in time coming.' Only thus, by threats of legal action, could the local church courts meet the refusal of the heritors to face their statutory liabilities, a refusal that was to become only too common as, with experience gained, the heritors became masters of the tactics of delay and postponement."⁹

The statutory liabilities and responsibilities of the heritors had been clearly and succinctly expressed in the 1646 act, passed by the parliament meeting at St Andrews — an "Act for founding of schooles in everie parochie". The heritors were required to provide a commodious house for the school, with a salary for the schoolmaster of not less than one hundred merks and not more than two hundred — the cost to be met by a tax on "everyone's rent of stock and teind". On any occasion on which the heritors failed to act, the presbytery was to nominate "twelve honest men" to act in their stead. Heritors still on occasions sidestepped their responsibilities but the introduction of this element of compulsion made it possible to proceed more effectively against such recalcitrants.

Strict presbyterial oversight was exercised over the schoolmasters themselves. The system of "privy censures" ensured that the presbytery had firm control of all teaching personnel. At a parochial visitation each schoolmaster was "removed" while the most careful enquiries were made in the meeting as to his scholastic and moral fitness for the post he held or was about to hold. This procedure was far from a mere formality, and certainly it is wrong to imagine that the presbytery rarely expressed its disapproval. In the case of the schoolmaster of Alloa, for example, at the privy censures in 1657, approval and compliments were forthcoming, but in 1694 the Denny master received a public reprimand, and in the following year the Larbert schoolmaster was not only found slothful and negligent, but, having refused to let the presbytery test his abilities, was deposed.

(d) Episcopal Authority and Educational Development

A substantial part of the period we are considering falls under the jurisdiction of bishops; but the promotion and supervision of education in Clackmannanshire during the episcopal periods have, in fact, few features that are different from the promotion and supervision in the non-episcopal periods. The presence and authority of the bishop appeared to make the practical control of education by presbyteries and by the kirk sessions no less effective: though he could initiate action — as, for example, in the procedures to be adopted in implementing the 1662 Act regarding the licensing of schoolmasters.

The bishop's part in church superintendence of education has been summarised as "a recognised regulatory function which.

⁹ Bain, A., *Education in Stirlingshire*, p. 48.

judging from entries in the registers of presbyteries, they endeavoured to fulfil by interpreting Acts of Parliament, in the promulgation of general acts and particular instructions, by initiating regular and special presbyterial visitations, by insisting upon positive local intervention and summoning quarrelsome parties to the superior court, by calling for periodical reports on certain aspects of education in the parishes, by settling parochial schools and by suppressing competition to the parish system.”¹⁰ This is a fairly impressive list.

For instance, a significant entry in the Stirling Presbytery minutes in February 1662 records the various directions of the Synod held the previous year, and, by implication, gives a picture of conditions obtaining then in Clackmannanshire. “. . . The Lord Bishop and Synod, being informed that there are many readers, schoolmasters, chaplaines, and pedagogues in this diocess who decline the oath of allegiance and suppremacie or any submission to, or owning, the present government to the Church” asked the “severall presbyteries carefullie to take notice that all readers, schoolemaisters, chaplaines and pedagogues within their bounds be such as have taken the oath of allegiance and suppremacie, and that they have ane licence from the Lord Bishop for the exercise of their respective employments, and that they who shall not, after warning, procure the said licence, be summoned and dischaired from exercising their places.”¹¹

Enactments in the name of the Bishop and Synod are fairly frequent in this period. In 1664, for example, the “Bishop and Synod” issued strict regulations about a further problem relating to schoolmasters. “This day it was made known to the Bishop and Synod of some who does intrude themselves into some paroches within the Diocese — who does take upon themselves to teach the grammare and English schools, and does not acquaint the Presbyteries therewith, and in particulare at the Kirk of Noriestoun. Therefore the Bishop and Synod ordains that hereafter none within the Diocese make paction with nor admit of anie schoolmaster for the forsayd effect until that first it be made known to the Presbytery; and lykwys it is ordained that the school at Noriestoun be discharged and dismissed”.¹²

Despite this regulation, instances continued to be discovered in which teaching was carried out by unauthorised schoolmasters; so much so, that it became necessary five years later to ratify the 1664 pronouncement. No schoolmaster was to be admitted to read in churches or exercise the office of schoolmaster within any church of the diocese “until that first the Presbytery be acquainted therewith and also approve to be qualified for the said office”.¹³

¹⁰ Bain, A., *Education in Stirlingshire*, p. 61.

¹¹ MSS. Stirling and Dunblane Presbytery Records, February 1662.

¹² *Diocesan Synod Register* (Blackwood, 1877), October 1664.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13th April 1669.

In exercising his legal prerogatives with regard to education, the bishop tended to frown upon schools kept by "non-conformists", and frequently made a schoolmaster's non-attendance to episcopal ordinances a sufficient reason for suppressing the school. An instance of this process is recorded in 1676, at which date there were several schools "keiped within the Diocese by diverse persones who did not observe public ordinances within their severall paroches". The only solution, as far as the Bishop saw, was to ask the "several ministeris within their respective paroches to make exact inquiry anent such schooles, and to use diligence for suppressing the same".¹⁴ Their success in doing so was not very great.

The religious factor is, of course, a dominant consideration throughout this whole period. However much the church authorities may have supported the idea of "secular" education, their principal concern was undoubtedly religion. A deliverance of the bishop of Edinburgh and of the synod, recorded in the Stirling and Dunblane Presbytery minutes, expresses this overriding concern for the "propagation of religion and piety". Since "ignorance, irreligion and profanes cannot bring much increase by the negligence of parents and schoolmasters", the bishop and synod "ordain the severall schoolmasters within the bounds to cause their scholars learne by heart and offer to God morning and evening before and after meatt the forme of prayers and thanksgiving which are now appoynted and approvin to be insert in the Synod records".¹⁵

Also incorporated in the presbytery minutes was an 'Act for Visiting of Schools' made by the Bishop and Synod in the following year, together with an 'Act anent Schoolmasters not Licensed.' Both of these acts provide details of the ecclesiastical supervision exercised in Clackmannanshire, and they show the central concern of the Church for education. The first runs: "The Bishop and Synod, understanding how necessar it is that all possible diligence and caire be used in the training and education of young ones in the knowledge and fear of God, and that those who are entrusted with their instruction be kept to their dewtie, have therefore thought it good to ordaine, and by these presents ordaines, that each minister with the concurrence of such of his Session and the brethern of the Presbytery as shall be appointed by the rest, together with such of the heritors of each parish and the magistrats of brughs as they can gett to concurre with them, visite the schools of the severall parishes once at least a year and take notice of the proficiencie of the scholars and diligence and fidelitie of the schoolmasters . . .".¹⁶

This enactment details the various categories of "visitors" which the synod and the bishop regard as appropriate participants in the

¹⁴ *Diocesan Synod Register* (Blackwood, 1877), 11th October 1676.

¹⁵ MSS. Stirling and Dunblane Presbytery Records, October 1672.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, April 1673.

process of superintendence. In particular, it illustrates in the seventeenth century the continuance of lay participation in the control of education through elders, heritors, magistrates. Nevertheless, the ultimate authority of the bishops and parliamentary sanction of the episcopal regime were also factors during that régime. Indeed, this is well illustrated in the "Act anent Schoolmasters not Licensed". "The Bishop and Synod, considering that by Act of Parliament it is ordained that none should teach young ones without the order of the Ordinarie of the Diocess, doth therefore ordaine that each presbyterie take notice of such schoolmasters within ther respective bounds as ar not licensed as said is, and that they send in ther names betwixt and the first of July nixt, and that speedie course may be taken to obviat the evils which may ensue . . ." ¹⁷

Teachers at this period were required not only to be licensed by the bishop, but to have taken the "Test"—the oath of allegiance to the crown and an acknowledgement of episcopacy as the legal and proper form of church polity. There is plenty of evidence in presbytery records of the care with which this responsibility for educational superintendence was fulfilled. In 1682 it was recorded that, according to the bishop's order, the presbytery was to "order their schoolmasters and chaplains within their respective paroches to goe to ther ordinar and take the test". ¹⁸ Later the same year, "Mr David Hardie designed schoolmaster for Airth, according to the Act of Parliament did swear and subscribe the oath called the test, in forme and manner appointed by the Lords of His Majesty's most honourable privie Counsell in the face of the presbyterie by vertue of a delegation from the Right Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Edinburgh." ¹⁹

There is no recorded instance of a Clackmannanshire schoolmaster's taking of the test before the end of the seventeenth century, but we know they must all have done so; otherwise, they would have lost their positions. It was no doubt natural that the superintending authority — whether episcopal or presbyterian — should require an appropriate declaration, as they saw it, but the relatively frequent changes of ecclesiastical policy may have caused a measure of confusion for some of the schoolmasters. After 1690, when the presbyterian form of church government was re-introduced, loyalty to that form of government was required of all schoolmasters, and they were obliged to take the oath *de fidei administratione officii*, i.e. an oath "taken by persons performing public duties that they will faithfully carry them out." ²⁰ It was, for example, taken in 1692 by William Provand, who had held the post of schoolmaster at Tillicoultry since 1658.

¹⁷ MSS. Stirling and Dunblane Presbytery Records.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, February 1682.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, July 1682.

²⁰ Gibb, A. D., *Student's Glossary of Scottish Legal Terms* (Edinburgh, 1946).

However, despite all these efforts by the church authorities, it seems clear that they were mainly concerned to supervise, rather than to promote, educational provision. Even by 1684 many of the presbyteries of the synod contained parishes which had no schools settled in them — e.g. Kilmadock. This situation prompted yet another “Act anent Schoolmasters”. “The Lord Bishop and Synod, considering hoe necessarie it is for the educatione of young children that everie paroch should be provyded with ane able and godly schoolmaster who is sufficiently qualyfyed to traine them up in the knowledge and fear of God, and in humane literature, and they being informed that some paroches of this diocie are not so provyded, they ordaine the ministers of thes paroches to be carefull to provyde them with such schoolmasters, and this to doe with all convenient diligence.”²¹ As far as the parishes of Clackmannanshire were concerned, however, there were no defaulters. Alloa (including Tullibody), Clackmannan, Tillicoultry, Dollar, and Alva had schools the existence of which is well attested in the respective kirk session records.

PART II

PATTERNS OF PARISH EDUCATION

(1) The Parish of Alloa

(a) *The Social Context*

Even before the Reformation, a school existed at Tullibody. Certainly, both educationally and ecclesiastically Alloa was outshone by Tullibody during the decades following the Reformation. For a time, indeed, Alloa Church was a mere appendage of Tullibody — which has led one writer to remark that, “ecclesiastically Alloa appears to have been nobody’s darling, and it was not until 1600, when the parishes of Tullibody and Alloa were united in one charge, that matters were, for the time being, straightened out”.²² However, even as early as 1497 there were indications of that population growth in Alloa which eventually led to this uniting of parishes, and, subsequently, to the ascendancy of Alloa. In that year the third Lord Erskine mortified rents of certain properties to provide an endowment for the priest who “officiated at the altar of St Mungo in the Kirk of Alloway”—the implication being that additional provision was needed to ensure adequate spiritual ordinances to the expanding population. After the reformation the population increased still further, so that Tullibody was no longer considered the ecclesiastical centre of the parish — a

²¹ MSS. Stirling Presbytery Records, 5th November 1684.

²² Gordon, T. C., *A Short History of Alloa* (Alloa. 1932), p. 12.

fact which was regularised in the presbytery's declaration in 1599 that Alloa was the parish church.

Whether the provision of substantial sums of money would have had a spectacular effect on educational provision in Alloa is a matter for speculation, but there are certainly no illuminating references to education in that village in the sixteenth century, even though its first Protestant minister, James Duncanson, M.A., was inducted there in 1589. In the seventeenth century references to educational provision are more frequent, although it is clear that the background of poverty and struggle seriously inhibited expansion in the parish.

There is little doubt that the need for expansion was urgent. An entry in the kirk session minutes for 1646 notes that it was written by "Mr William Lyndsay, clerk of the session of Alloway, and subscribed by the foresaid Minister and elders that can write".²³ The existence of unlettered elders would surely serve as a strong motive for improving the educational facilities of the parish. There are certainly many entries in these minutes throughout the century, indicating a widespread inability to write. In the same year, evidence given by a woman to the Session ends with the annotation: "testifies be our subscriptions because sho can not wreat".

(b) The Kirk Session and the Parochial School

In common with most kirk sessions in the seventeenth century, that of Alloa exercised to some effect its powers of "discipline". Countless examples may be found in the Minutes of discipline in cases of fornication, and those failing to keep the sabbath were inevitably brought before the kirk session to answer for, and be chastised for, their transgression. "Compeared Margrit Murray in Cambes for profanation of the sabbath by carrying a burden of coales to Tillibodie." "Thomas Mores and James Johnstone for drinking in tyme of divine service are ordered to mak publick repentance."²⁴

In the light of this strenuous supervision by the kirk session over all aspects of parochial life, it is not surprising that it exercised a very real measure of control over education, a task in which it was often joined by baron courts. The presbytery, as the superior court, had occasion to exercise its authority, but, by and large, it was obliged to assume that the parish minister and the kirk session would cope adequately with the local problems and requirements relating to schools. To a very great extent, they did cope. One of the duties specifically laid upon the elder of each district of the parish in 1653 was that he should persuade parishioners to send their children to school. "The Minister desyred the elders through ther severall quarters would tak notice of bairns

²³ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 18th January 1646.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6th April and 29th July 1654.

capable of learning, that they be put to school.”²⁵ Very little about the parish school and about kirk session supervision of it appears in the first few decades of the seventeenth century. Minutes begin in 1609, but they are extremely difficult to decipher before mid-century. However, a partially decipherable entry for 1618 is of considerable value as it offers the first substantial record of a school and of a schoolmaster in Alloa — although we must, of course, beware of interpreting this to mean that no school existed before that date. The schoolmaster in that year was concerned about the “bairnes quarter payments” which, in many cases, he had not received, and he appealed to the session to take action about this common practice of parents, whereby children were sent to, and kept off, school at the whim (or need) of the parents. The elders’ solution to the problem was for the schoolmaster to note the day of the month when the children came to school, and, on failing to bring their fees after fourteen days, they were to be denied education by the schoolmaster.²⁶ Here, then, is evidence of sessional supervision of education, and of the circumstance which, almost more than anything else, hindered the development of education in the seventeenth century — namely, the lack of support from many of the parents.

Apart from a fleeting reference to a “Reidar schoolmaster” in 1625, there is little information on schools between 1618 and 1645, but the latter date stands as one of the real milestones in the history of schooling in the parish; for in that year Alloa school was made the parish school. The master appointed was Mr William Lindsay, and he was admitted by the kirk session to the “office of Schoolemaster of the whole parosch with all the casualties belonging thereto; as the hundred pounds per annum imposed and divided by the visitations of the kirk with consent of the heritors”.²⁷ This, however, was more impressive than it sounded. In fact, a school building erected specifically for school purposes was not provided for another fifty years. During these decades the pupils met in the church.

It was this somewhat unsatisfactory situation which at last prompted some action by the Presbytery of Stirling. “Finding that there is not a schole house in the toune, the children being taught in the kirk, the Presbytery doo ordaine the Minister and elders to deall effectuallie with the heritors and parochinars for taking a speddie course to build ane scholehouse for accommodation of the schollars, and to report their dilligence.”²⁸ This kind of situation was not, of course, uncommon. One writer has claimed that over the seventeenth century remarkably little change had taken place in the conditions under which children studied, and that most of

²⁵ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 23rd September 1653.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4th October 1618.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30th April 1645.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13th June 1693.

the schools were held in the church. And further, that by the end of the century, children in at least twenty one of the Lanarkshire parishes were still attending schools held in churches.²⁹

The dominant position of the kirk session — not the heritors — in making appointments to the Alloa school and in supervising education generally is particularly striking during the century. There is hardly a mention of heritors as such in the church records of this century. In 1667, for example, the Kirk Session, “considering of the vacancie of the schoolmaster and reader’s place by the removall of Mr Patrick Combrie, therefore being informed of the literature and qualifications of Mr Robert Young in Stirling have ordained, and ordains, that the said Mr Robert shall be reader and schoolmaster in Alloa till Martinmas nixt or longer as the Session shall think fit, and enjoy the benefits appertaining thereto, who being present accepted the same, promising to discharge the duties thereof faithfully”.³⁰ Five years later the kirk session, without apparently consulting the heritors, decided that a Mr David Mitchell should be admitted schoolmaster, precentor, and session clerk, and the same procedure was repeated with Mitchell’s successor. The authority of the Kirk Session is specifically mentioned in the case of the appointment of John Kennedie, for, in accepting his post, he “promises to discharge his duty faithfully in the schools, and to be obedient to the session”.³¹ Similarly in 1697 (one year, that is, after the act which prescribed in some detail heritor responsibilities for education) there is no mention of heritors in connection with the appointment of John Cousine who was simply “enjoined to be obedient to the session” in his capacity as doctor to the school.

This does not, however, mean that the heritors played no part in schoolmaster appointments. They were usually consulted by the session, though it is clear from the records that the session was the dominant executive body and that, in particular, the minister played a crucial role both in schoolmaster appointments and in the general supervision of the school.

(c) *The Kirk Session and Adventure Schools*

At the appointment of the parochial schoolmaster in 1645, the Kirk Session discharged all other schools in the parish — in itself, important evidence of a substantial growth in adventure schools and of the kirk session’s determination to “protect” the parochial school (and its teacher’s emoluments) by a strong exercise of its (i.e. the Session’s) powers of superintendence. One of the first references to this situation occurs in 1667 when “Patrick Anderson put in a supplication to the Session concerning one Robert Dilly who had taken up a schoole in Tillibodie town, which is huntfull

²⁹ Mackintosh, *M.*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³⁰ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 14th July 1667.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19th November 1690.

to him who has gotten a licence to keep a schoole there. Therefore the session hath ordained that Robert Dilly be discharged to keep a schoole there, or that any put their children to him".³² As Dilly's school would draw pupils away from the school sponsored by the kirk session, and thus reduce the amount of fees payable by parents to the "licensed" schoolmaster, the session resolved that it could not encourage any such adventure school.

This incident was only the beginning of a problem which, before long, would severely tax the authority of the kirk session. In the decade following the Tullibody incident, several unauthorised schools emerged on the educational scene in the parish, and the session endeavoured to counter this by ordaining "that no schooles in the town should teach lads except the kirke schoole".³³ As was true of many places in Scotland, schoolmistresses (or 'dames') were beginning to play a somewhat more substantial role in Clackmannanshire education. Kirk sessions objected to them, as a rule, not simply because they deplored any kind of adventure school and any kind of interference with the parochial schoolmaster's emoluments, but also because they deplored the idea of young boys being educated along with girls — as was frequently the practice in such schools. One commentator writing in 1874, on the above kirk session entry for 1679, notes: "Even within the memory of man, 'dame schools' prevailed to an alarming extent; consequently, it is presumed, the adoption of this stringent measure."³⁴ However, it was one thing to adopt the measure, and another to enforce it.

In 1694 a complaint was presented to the session by the schoolmaster and doctor (i.e. assistant) of the school of Alloa, showing to what extent the influx of adventure schools had taken place. "Forasmuch as by the many schools kept by men and women within the town and parish of Alloa, the forsaid school is rendered to no effect, for that when children are corrected for vile and gross faults such as cursing and swearing and profaning the Sabbath day, they thereupon desert and withdraw themselves from the same, and are accordingly received by other schools; therefore they humbly crave that an act of session be made against such a disorder, to the end the school may be more closely observed and better ordered, and all vice and profanity restrained." The session did not hesitate to respond by ordaining that "none take upon themselves to be schoolmasters or to keep schools either in the town of Alloa or in the parish, without the session's special consent thereto".³⁵

Any attempt to adopt the principle of "one school, one parish" was being questioned, certainly by the people if not by the kirk

³² MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 20th October 1667.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2nd October 1679.

³⁴ Crawford, J., *Memorials of the Town and Parish of Alloa* (Alloa, 1874), pp. 141-142.

³⁵ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 10th June 1694.

session. In 1692 Alloa was noted in Tucker's report on Scottish burghs as having a considerable trade; so much so that the royal burgh of Stirling bitterly complained about it.³⁶ Population increase was making inevitable an additional provision for education in the town and parish. When the kirk session determined to establish a small school in Holetoun in 1691, they were but reflecting the realisation that the *status quo* could not be preserved, and that in this instance the provision of a legal school had to be supplemented by another, supervised by the session. The session did, indeed, support this school financially, undertaking, for example, to pay John Carron, the teacher, two shillings monthly "for his encouragement". School fees were, of course, in addition.³⁷ There was even some appreciation before the end of the seventeenth century of the fact that adventure schools might, on occasion, be a healthy feature of the parochial scene. But, whatever the school, the kirk session claimed the power to supervise it, and one authority claims that "in Alloa there were several schools, the teachers of which, though not salaried by the session, were strictly ruled by them, being often called before that court and enjoined regarding their duties". Adventure schools were also to be found in Cambus, "of which Andrew Chalmers was teacher at the time of the Revolution", and in Collyland, "which latterly was subsidised by the session".³⁸

One example of this process of summoning of teachers for exhortation by the Session is preserved in an entry for 1693. At that date "the teacher of schooles within the town of Alloa, being called before the Session, were exhorted to correct the children under their charge for swearing and sabbath-breaking, and for every other sin, if they should be found guiltie, and to instruct them in the larger and shorter catechismes, as also to enjoin them to learn to seek God by prayer evening and morning, and to prescribe prayers and graces to them, according to their capacities".³⁹ This entry, incidentally, provides a good clue as to the main feature of the school curriculum at the time, both in the parochial school and in the other schools in the parish. References to the "secular" aspects of education in Alloa during the century are very scanty in comparison with references to the moral and religious aspects. It has been observed that, in connection with texts used during the century, "the chief reading book was the 'Proverbs'".⁴⁰ After 1690 the Catechism and Confession were in use. But this is far from saying that the Church regarded schools merely as institutions for promoting Bible reading. The point is that "the hard facts of economics rather than

³⁶ Tucker, T., *The State and Condition of Every Burgh in Scotland* (Scot. Burgh Records Soc., 1881).

³⁷ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 8th February 1691.

³⁸ Watt, L. M., *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³⁹ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 11th August 1693.

⁴⁰ Watt, L. M., *op. cit.*, p. 41.

the limited vision of the Reformers curtailed the curriculum of the parish (and other) schools of the seventeenth century. Limitations in the curriculum of these schools must therefore be viewed against a background of struggle and poverty".⁴¹

(d) *Church Support of Poor Pupils*

The "hard fact of economics" may have limited not only curriculum development, but school attendance itself. The poverty of the people was certainly one of the major factors which inhibited educational progress in the seventeenth century, as in the following two centuries. But it was not a factor to which the Church turned a blind eye. One of several reasons why the Church could rightly claim to supervise education in those early days was the profound, practical concern which she demonstrated for the plight of poor pupils. The Alloa Kirk Session, like many other sessions throughout the country, faced this problem of parishioners' poverty with realism and generosity. At a meeting held towards the end of 1653, "the Minister exhorted the elders to cause put the bairnes within their severall quarters to school, and if any war so poore that they could not doe duetie to the Master, that the session should doe the same".⁴²

Even earlier in the century there was ample evidence of this enlightened policy towards education by the kirk session, for monies had from time to time been made available not only to residents of the parish, but to several outside its bounds. In the Register of Collections and Discharges, the following sample disbursements are to be found:

1647 — to ane stranger, a scholler	58 sh.
1649 — Item, to St Andrews student for yeare 1649	13sh. 4 d.
1650 — Item, the highland schollars contribution	£10 2 sh. 6 d.

The middle reference, of course, concerns a bursar, a theology student, at St Andrews University, the bursar being supported by the presbytery. This was a practice commonly found throughout the presbyteries of the Church at the time. Speaking, for example, of Ayrshire presbyteries, it has been remarked that "the presbyteries, realising how much they depended on men of learning as preachers and teachers, did much to encourage the students. Every church had to contribute burse money in proportion to its numbers to help the needy ones to pay their way, and the individual churches made grants from time to time to poor students within their bounds".⁴³ The same principle applied in the case of the "highland scollars contribution" which appears, however, to have been intended for the support of scholars at university rather than the response of the Church to the particularly inadequate provision of education in the Highlands.

⁴¹ Mackintosh, M., *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁴² MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 12th December 1653.

⁴³ Boyd, W., *Education in Ayrshire* (U.L.P., 1961), p. 33.

The financial support provided by the kirk session of Alloa to schoolchildren of the parish is, however, our main concern here. No doubt, as the century progressed, parental interest in education was growing — though at a very slow pace. But the kirk session certainly could not relax its vigil. In 1671, for instance, it felt obliged to direct that “intimation should be made the next sabbath from the pulpit to parents to be more careful in educating their children at schooles”.⁴⁴ The general principle has been stated in regard to sessional supervision, that “the attendance was enforced by the Session, who from time to time appointed Committees of their number to visit the parish and compel the parents to send their children to school”,⁴⁵ but it did not do this without providing the means by which any genuinely needy pupil would be accommodated in the school. In one case the quarterly payment for “James Short, a poor scholar, was appointed to be paid out of the poor’s box”, and a meeting of the Session in 1691 decided that “some bibles and confessions of faith should be bought and distributed among the poorer sort in the paroch for their incouragement in learning; which was done accordingly”.⁴⁶

Each elder was expected to keep a list of poor pupils in the district for which he was responsible, and to confirm the parents’ inability to pay the regular fees. Interestingly enough, one list produced to the Session in 1693 contained eight names, of which five were girls. Perhaps this was symbolic of a phenomenon to be observed throughout Scotland in the seventeenth century, namely, the participation of girls in education — a participation which both led to, and was a product of, the development of dame schools, the presence of which in Alloa parish has already been noted.

(2) The Parish of Clackmannan

Although a few references to early post-Reformation preachers are to be found in connection with the church of Clackmannan, virtually nothing is available to attest to educational activity in the parish before the late seventeenth century. In 1562 John White became reader in the parish, but there is no evidence to connect him or his immediate successors, Walter Millar, Alexander Balvaird and Patrick Laing, with a school. In 1670, however, a brief entry in the session minutes reveals the existence of a school. In that year “Mr John Buchanan was admitted to be precentor in the kirk, session clerk, and schoolmaster”.⁴⁷ How long before this date a school existed is unknown, but it is clear

⁴⁴ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 22nd January 1671.

⁴⁵ Watt, L. M., *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ MSS. Alloa Kirk Session Minutes, 19th November 1690 and 13th November 1691.

⁴⁷ MSS. Clackmannan Kirk Session Minutes, September 1670.

that by this date the kirk session's jurisdiction was well established, as is also the practice whereby the offices of precentor, session clerk, and schoolmaster were held by the same man.

As in the case of Alloa, heritors did not become a major force in educational matters until late in the seventeenth century. The year 1685 had particular significance for the parish, for not only did it see an increasing participation of the heritors in the matter of the schoolmaster's appointment and salary, but also the erection or repair of the schoolhouse. "Six pund Scots ordained to be given for payment of the schoolhouse". And although the Kirk Session are still the dominant force in securing a new schoolmaster, the appointment of Mr Walter Anderson was made only "with the consent of the whole heritors in the parish of Clackmannan".⁴⁸

(3) The Parish of Tillicoutry

One of the most interesting and illuminating of the early references to education in the parish occurs in reports presented by a Commission set up by Charles I in 1627. This Commission was to receive the surrender of unappropriated teinds and benefices which were to be used to provide for the clergy. Perhaps the only one of the items in a report on this parish bearing on education is this. "Ninthlie — Forasmuch as this parish is the most competent part for holding of a school, and training up of youth, there is presently a school in the parish but no foundit rent for the samyn, but desireth that was ane competent means allotit for maintenance of the samyn."⁴⁹

Not until 1647, in fact, was there any prospect of securing not only a proper financial support for the education of children in the parish, but also an actual school building. As was true of so many Scottish parishes, schooling of a kind may have been carried on in the early years of the seventeenth century, but in makeshift premises or in the church itself. The entry in the Session records for 1647 is partially unreadable, owing to dampness and fading, but we discover that "the Act for the plantation of scholis was publickly intimate" and that the heritors were instructed by the Session to secure a site and materials "for building a scholl".⁵⁰ This is probably the clearest reference in all the Clackmannanshire parishes to the importance of the 1646 Act for the county, and to the fact of specific action being taken to implement it. It is also the starting point of a decade or two of delaying tactics by the heritors. Despite pressure from the kirk session, and despite the fact that several schoolmasters were appointed in the following years, the new school remained unbuilt. Sessional authority had evidently proved insufficient.

⁴⁸ MSS. Clackmannan Kirk Session Minutes, 22nd March 1685.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Watson, T., *Tillicoutry in Olden Times* (Tillicoutry, 1881), p. 23.

⁵⁰ MSS. Tillicoutry Kirk Session Minutes, December 1647.

Did the authority of the superior court — the presbytery — have any greater effect on the recalcitrant heritors? Certainly the Presbytery carried out a visitation in 1654, and noted that “the present schoolmaster did give in a petition to the Presbytery showing that he was greatly discouraged”. The Presbytery ruled that he must be paid his legal salary, and ordained “that ane schooll and house for the schoolmaster be forthwith built”.⁵¹ Nevertheless, another decade went by and the new school remained unbuilt.

If the Church’s authority over the Tillicoultry heritors seemed to be something less than complete, it remained fully effective over the schoolmasters. There are several references to the kirk session’s disciplining of William Provand, who was schoolmaster at Tillicoultry for the last forty years of the seventeenth century, and to Provand’s ready acceptance of the session’s authority. The presbytery, too, exercised its supervisory function over him, as, for example, in 1700 when he was called before that court to subscribe the Confession of Faith.

As in the case of Alloa and of Clackmannan, the Tillicoultry kirk session not only adopted an “authoritarian” attitude towards parents with a view to securing the children’s attendance at school, but supported all poor children by paying their school fees. “William Provand, schoolmaster, represented to the Session that there were two poor scholars with him, and that it was in use to the Session to pay him for the poor scholars when their parents were unable.”⁵² The liberal attitude of the Session in meeting cases of genuine need, including regular payments to bursars who were students of divinity, is underlined all the more by the fact that, in the last decade of the century which included many years of famine there were frequent references to the “clamant case of the poor in the parish” — and apparently even the minister had to seek a loan from the Session (on condition they did not make his name public!), 300 merks being loaned to him from “the box”.⁵³

(4) The Parish of Alva

As Alva Kirk Session records do not begin until 1681, and presbytery records take little account of the parish, information about the Church control of education there is extremely scanty. As soon as the records commence a schoolmaster William Smith appears and at a meeting of the kirk session was exhorted to be “diligent and faithfull” in the discharge of his duties — no suggestion being made that he had previously been lacking in this regard. How long before this date the school had existed, it is impossible to tell.

⁵¹ MSS. Dunblane Presbytery Records, 5th February 1654.

⁵² MSS. Tillicoultry Kirk Session Minutes, 28th December 1692.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12th February 1696.

Even if the records were extant there may have been a limited amount to attest. Even by the end of the century there were not more than fifty or sixty families in the village, and owing to its smallness from 1581 to 1632 Alva parish was united with Tillicoultry, the Alva minister officiating in both. What one may assert with certainty is that religion comprised the chief subject of the "curriculum" and that the kirk session was frequently at pains to impress upon the schoolmaster the centrality of religion for the training of his pupils. In one of many exhortations, the minister, on behalf of the session, stressed the necessity for the schoolmaster "to have insight in the knowledge of God and principles of religion, to pray morning and evening at the coming and going away of the scholars, and soberly to punish swearing".⁵⁴

(5) The Parish of Dollar

Since church records at Dollar also do not begin until near the end of the seventeenth century, and since presbytery records are as reluctant to mention Dollar as they are to mention Alva, very little can be said of this parish's educational provision and of the Church's part in promoting and supervising it. The parish did, if we are to believe the *Old Statistical Account*, see the establishment of a school about 1640 — the building still standing to this day at the Burnside. "The school was erected in the reign of King Charles I, as appears from the decreit of locality, dated 1640, for 100 merks Scotch."⁵⁵

Although details of the school's operation during the next fifty years are virtually non-existent, references in the final decade of the seventeenth century provide some intriguing information. Essentially, the position was that the kirk session (in contrast with other parishes) had relatively little authority in the matter of the school; that the heritors, who were actively concerned about schooling, were not unanimous about courses of action; and that the presbytery exercised its supervisory function with considerable timidity. The main interest centres round the incident which arose from the presbytery's receipt of two communications from the heritors in 1693. "The Presbyterie having considered one invitation from some of the Heritors of Dollar to John Daes to be their schoolmaster in Dollar and ane other invitation to Mr James Anderson from others of the Heritors of the paroch to be schoolmaster, the Presbyterie delays any determination thereanent till they be further informed."⁵⁶

But if this intriguing situation was eventually settled without any legal battle, the same could not be said for an even more serious incident a few years later. In 1699 the presbytery felt obliged to

⁵⁴ MSS. Alva Kirk Session Minutes, 24th April 1681.

⁵⁵ *Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. 15, p. 166.

⁵⁶ MSS. Stirling Presbytery Records, 25th October 1693.

discharge a Mr Ritchie from his post as schoolmaster. Despite his protests and his "taking instruments", the presbytery, aware of its rights and responsibilities in the matter of educational superintendence, arranged for the installation of a new schoolmaster — a Mr Geddies. But some indication of the presbytery's lack of determination and authority can be seen from the fact that, while Mr Geddies may have been the teacher accredited by the presbytery, "Mr Ritchie yet keeps the school and possesses the schoolhouse".⁵⁷

From this situation a long, drawn-out legal case developed, with the presbytery being compelled to seek the assistance of the sheriff. This procedure was, of course, followed by many presbyteries in similar circumstances, but it is worth noting that, for Clackmannanshire in the seventeenth century, this recourse to the civil authority to deal with recalcitrant schoolmasters was not typical of the pattern of superintendence.

In short, by 1700 educational provision in Clackmannanshire, for all its deficiencies, was not unreasonable, and there is little doubt, from a careful appraisal of the available records, that the dominant factor in securing this provision was the Church, whose influence and control was exercised not only through the many enactments of the General Assembly, but through the local presbyteries and kirk sessions, and, not least, through the individual ministers who, despite their sternness and preoccupation with the theme of religious training, helped to lay the foundation of a parochial system of education which was soon to become the envy of many from beyond the borders of Scotland.

⁵⁷ MSS. Stirling Presbytery Records, 21st June 1699.

